

WHAT'S IN A TIN BOX?

Roy Gault

Well, in this case, it's biscuits! Probably the most well known brand of biscuits in the world is 'Huntley & Palmers', which used to be based in Reading. So famous were they that the local football team is known as the 'Biscuit Men', and Reading itself was called 'Biscuit Town'.

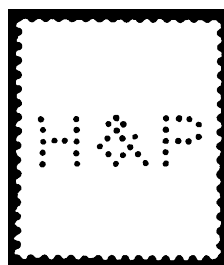


The beginnings of the firm go back to 1822 when the Quaker Joseph Huntley (born 1775) opened a small bakery in London Street, Reading. Around 1829, Joseph's older son Thomas joined his father and formed 'J Huntley & Son'. The business thrived, but Joseph Huntley had to retire in 1838 due to ill health, so Thomas sought a new partner. In 1841 he was joined by fellow Quaker, George Palmer (1818-1897), at which point the company became known as 'Huntley & Palmer'.

In 1846 the company moved to larger premises in Kings's Road, and also began to use steam powered machinery to make the biscuits. After Thomas's death in 1857, George Palmer continued the business with the help of his two brothers, Samuel Palmer and William Isaac Palmer, and the company became the now familiar '**Huntley & Palmers**'.

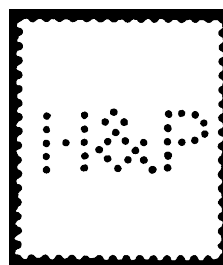
Just two perfins are known to have been used by 'Huntley & Palmers', although by then there were no Huntley family representatives involved in the running of the business.

1870-1885



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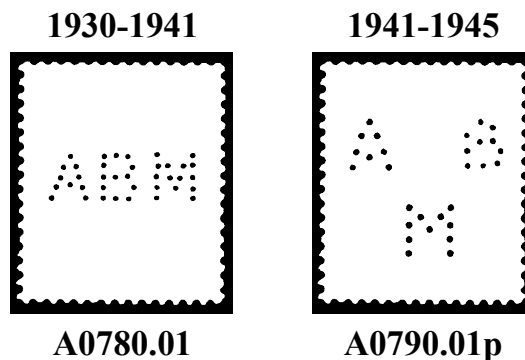
1885-1957



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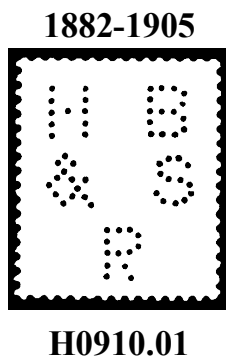
After George's death, the company took on Limited Liability status (in 1898) becoming 'Huntley and Palmers Ltd'. 1921 saw them combine with 'Peck Frean' to form 'Associated Biscuit Manufacturers Ltd'.

Two dies were used by the ‘Associated Biscuit Manufacturers Ltd’, although both ‘Huntley & Palmer’ and ‘Peek Frean’ continued to use their own dies throughout the period. Unfortunately, space doesn’t allow the illustration of the ‘Peek Frean’ dies here!



In 1960, the Liverpool based biscuit company of ‘W & R Jacob & Co’ joined the group, but after a major re-organisation in 1969, the three units ceased trading as independent entities. Instead, they traded simply as ‘Associated Biscuits Ltd’. The ‘Huntley and Palmers’ biscuit factory at Reading was finally closed in 1972.

But where does the ‘Tin Box’ come in? Well if we go back to Reading in the 1830’s, we would find that the younger son of Joseph Huntley, also called Joseph Huntley (1807-1895), had, in 1832, established an ironmongers shop across the road from his father’s biscuit factory.



He initially produced the tins to transport the biscuits his father & brother made, but in 1846 he was joined by Mr Boorne to form ‘Huntley & Boorne’. It is on record that they produced hinged tins from 1863. The third partner, Mr Stevens, joined in 1872 to form ‘Huntley, Boorne & Stevens’.

From 1878, in collaboration with ‘Bryant & May’, ‘Huntley, Boorne & Stevens’ produced coloured ‘novelty’ biscuit tins and patented tin ‘match boxes’, all of which are now highly sought after by collectors.

In 1918 ‘Huntley & Palmers’ bought ‘Huntley, Boorne & Stevens’, but in 1985 the company was sold to Linpac. In 2000 they ceased to make tins altogether, thus ending a long and illustrious history.